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NOAA AWARDS OVER \$1.5 MILLION TO *RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has awarded a grant for over \$1.5 million to *Restore America's Estuaries* as part of a multi-project cooperative partnership to restore habitat important to the conservation of coastal fisheries in 11 estuaries from Maine to Washington. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Through this award, RAE will implement habitat restoration projects to benefit marine, estuarine and riparian habitats in 11 major estuaries of the Gulf of Maine, Narragansett Bay, Long Island Sound, Hudson-Raritan Estuary, Chesapeake Bay, Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds, Tampa Bay, Louisiana's Mississippi Delta, Galveston Bay, San Francisco Bay and the Puget Sound.

"NOAA's goal of healthy coastal habitats and vibrant coastal communities can be accomplished when there is strong local stewardship of the habitats that support our fisheries resources as we have with the *Restore America's Estuaries* partnership," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "NOAA and the Bush Administration are working to improve the understanding of our environment and to strengthen local and regional initiatives like habitat restoration, protection and fishery development."

Mark Wolf-Armstrong, president of *Restore America's Estuaries*, said, "We are delighted to be partnering with NOAA's Restoration Center for another three years, and we look forward to closing in on the nation's goal of restoring one million acres of estuarine habitat by 2010. Our partnership will build on our earlier successes and result in hundreds of new restoration projects, leading to more engaged communities and healthier coasts for us and our children."

The funding will support the creation of a three-year partnership between RAE and the NOAA Restoration Center for coastal habitat restoration projects. The projects will improve fisheries by providing nursery areas and food sources for commercially and recreationally fished species. The partnership implements on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that restore marine, estuarine and riparian habitats. These habitats may include salt marshes, seagrass beds, oyster reefs, coral reefs, mangrove forests, shellfish beds and freshwater spawning and rearing habitats in streams and rivers.

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RAE's mission is to preserve the nation's network of estuaries by protecting and restoring the lands and waters essential to the richness and diversity of coastal life. Past projects funded through the NOAA Fisheries partnership with RAE include small projects that foster environmental stewardship, large-scale hydrologic marsh restorations and citizen-driven dam removals.

The NOAA community-based restoration program has been working with community organizations and local governments to support locally-driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas since 1996. NOAA CRP funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that offer educational and social benefits for people and their communities in addition to long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. To date, nearly 800 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners. For more information on the CRP, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth's natural systems in order to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property, and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 34 years.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

Since 1995, Restore America's Estuaries has worked closely with community, business, academic and governmental organizations to preserve the extraordinary heritage of our nation's estuaries. Restore America's Estuaries members are: American Littoral Society, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Conservation Law Foundation, Galveston Bay Foundation, North Carolina Coastal Federation, People for Puget Sound, Save San Francisco Bay Association, Save The Bay - Narragansett Bay, Save the Sound - Long Island Sound, and Tampa BayWatch. To learn more about Restore America's Estuaries, please visit <http://www.estuaries.org/>.